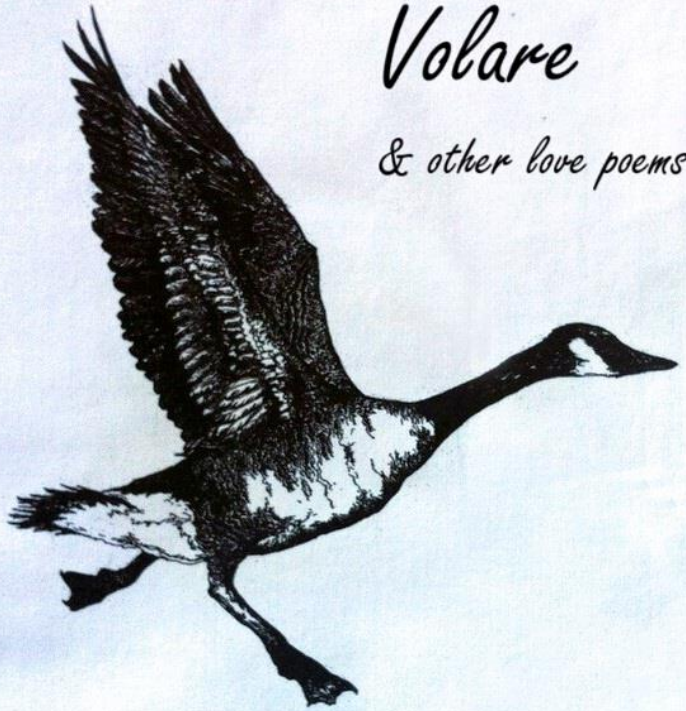


Volare

& other love poems



Andreas Gripp

Volare & other love poems

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Volare & other love poems

Andreas Gripp

Silver Starling Press

CANADA

Volare & other love poems
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Acknowledgements

30 poems in this collection were written from scratch from September of 2024 to December of 2024, while others date a little earlier (which have had either minor or major revisions during this same period and have appeared in previous books of mine):

"google it", August 2024

"me too", September 2023

The Mona Fucking Lisa, July 2023

Mahavira, April 2023

Love Poem for a Woman, April 2023

Juxtapositions, April 2023

Meter Maid, March 2023

The following are somewhat older but were deemed appropriate for this particular book:

Paris, 2020

This is the Reason, 2020

A Place Beneath the Water, 2015

Cassiopeia, 2012

The Carnation. 2012

Psalm for Aquarius, 2006



Volare

The Latin word *volare* is a verb that means *to fly*. When an acute accent is added to the final "e"—*volaré*—it becomes the Spanish phrase for *I will fly*.

—courtesy of a Google search.

They say that Latin's
a dead language.
No one ever speaks it
anymore—except
to try and impress.

I know a friend who
sprinkles Latin
in his poems:
il sole for the sun,
le stelle for the stars,
and no one gives a shit.

I could surely
render it *eloquent*,
in the tongue
of Imperial Rome,
but I'd rather not
squander this moment
on the topic of
vile dung.

I will tell you
instead
you are loved,
with the flair of
te amo,

so close to the
Italian
I will text in '25,
in the *snap*
of chat's connection,
the dissolving
of face-to-face;

more perilous
than a man
who crept in
daunted, onto the floor
of the Coliseum,
the roar of crowds
and lions
which had drowned
his palpitations,

an unsheathed sword
in his hand, palms
glazed with sweat,
fretful to face the
fury that awaited.

You Ask for a Poem for Peace

and I give you this:

it's Gordon Ramsey
saying that *it's ok,*
you tried your best;
when the wellington
is raw
and the patrons
up and leave;

it's the MAGA
unloading their guns,
hugging Mexicans
who *jump*
the Rio Grande;

it's Trump
declining the
Presidency, selling
all his assets
and giving billions
to every women's
shelter in sight;

it's Israelis
singing the songs of
Palestine,
vacating
the West Bank,
rebuilding
the homes in Gaza
and *reusing*
their deadly drones
to deliver food;

while Kim Jong Un
takes a good long
look in the mirror,
decides to spike his
hair, donning a
rainbow shirt
while giving *Vladimir*
a call, asking him
to call off
all his soldiers,
beg Zelenskyy
for forgiveness,
offer trillions
in reparations;

and in an alley
of urban blight,
Bezos carries beggars
to his mansion,
Elon giving chase,

offering rocket trips
to space—
free of charge,

saying love has
never looked better
from our bleeding,
cobalt sky.

The Recluse

For years I've played it
safe or so you've said,
bolting shut the windows
when it's sunny,
turning off the news
before the weather,
never-ever risking
I'll be hurt.

And why wouldn't I?
I save on 3-ply tissues
if I do; in fact, I don't have to
buy another box,

with its forgettable
print of feathers,
its stagnant, ocean
blue—

as if for a guppy
with nowhere to go,
the never-ending hours
of ennui—that a bowl of glass
will give, never mind
the *parrot's* proverbial
cage—gilded or otherwise—

its voice unheard
and wings which cannot
fly,

like the woman down the
lane
whom we think is
agoraphobic,
when it's the *opposite*
that's true,

knocking upon the wood of
her weighty door—

no, not from the porch's
welcome mat
of you've finally made it home,

but from the mudless, sheepskin
rug that's on the *inside*,

the fervent rap of knuckles
on what once
was the pulse of a tree,
begging all the world
to let her out.

Monday, 7am

You greet me with
Morning, never
Good Morning—
like you did when
hearts were younger.

Morning
rises from a
horizon, like an inmate
from a metal bed,
nothing to cushion
his nightmares—
sentenced to relive a
life
that isn't a life—
the cursing, the welts,
the bruises;
the slop passed off
as food;

the absence of
privacy,
when one needs it the
very most,
gone with the
gurgle of a flush.

Good Morning
is harkened by
glows, the lilt
from a lark
at dawn,
the gradual
lift of the light,
each moment
far brighter
than the last.

Morning is stating
the obvious, the drudge of a
turtle-drive,
the blaring of
horns at red,
a finger in the *air*
from the car
that will pass you
on the right.

It's the demand
from your boss
to get cracking,
the indigestion
from the eggs, expired,

the coffee from *McDonald's*
too acidic,
the leaving of
your kitchen
without a kiss.

Good Morning
is the merge
of fervent lips,
the ecstasy
of a lingering
hug, a taste
from the dreams
before,

the confession
of a love
that never wearies,
never reaches
for a cup

until the curtains
have been opened
and you stand
in gaping awe
at what's to come.

Only Two Words

The answer to this
question is
yes or no.

That's *three* words.

Everyone assumes
the *yes* is most important,
the positive-affirmative
of *yes, I'll be happy to help;*
yes, let's call it a date;
she said yes when I asked her
to marry me;

that *no* is ripe
with negative connotations,
its signs of *no right turn on*
red; no exit;
no, I'm already going to the
prom which you never forgot.

No one gives any credence
to the *or*, though it's simmering
on the stove of
possibilities,

the middle door you
take when making a *deal*,
supposedly vacant of
worth,

but flexible *enough*
you're never trapped.

Or ascends
the current of the
late-day breeze,
coming from the west
and then the east,

the north when it is
humid, the south
with its winter respite
from the ice, thawing
your dithered brain
like a Bunsen burner.

I learned from *Conjunction*
Junction
(*what's your function?*),
an earworm from '73,

despite my knowing
a schoolhouse
never rocks,
unless it's filled with
stones
from the Moon
or Mars,

that if given the freedom of
choice I'd take the Moon,
looking down on Earth
while all the people made
decisions—

who is saved
and who is not,

who is *loved*
and who is not,

that when it comes
to *war and peace*,

we inserted the wrong
connector;

that *or*
would have laid the
cards out on the table:

a Queen of hearts;
a King of clubs;

and a Joker always laughing
while you sweat.

Upon Hearing This Isn't Love

This should be a
love poem nowadays.
Don't let anyone
tell you otherwise.

There's surely *hearts* involved
throughout the stanzas
on *genocide*—

what greater flood of love
exists
when a family's been
put to death—

by a drone
that callously hovers
once your baby
has been bled?

There isn't even a
chance
to sing your grief—
when funerals
run for cover
before the dusk,

when the Gazans that *were*
are not—met with just a
shrugging of the shoulders.

If it's you who've shrugged,
write a sonnet
on the mother
with no arms,
unable to carry the
daughter who's been shred.

Say she's never
felt *amour*,
that the husband
who tried his best
is simply asleep
beneath the walls.

Call this didactic
drivel, that the photo
from their wedding
isn't worth the time of day,

the son now-wrapped
in shrapnel,
who's excluded
from the rhythm of the page,

the dog
in a hundred pieces
around your feet—

that it will be
the *lucky* one I say,
will never have a clue
its human starves,

one who's covered in *chalk*
around the block,
who stared at the sky
when the *birds* flew
for their lives,

thinking there's a poem
which needs to soar
out into the
world,

scrawled with the
crimson colour
that's been leaking
from his finger,
like the black
of a fountain pen,

rendered on his stomach
like a fan at a football
game:

*from the river
to the sea
we will be free*

Someday *limping*
hand-in-hand
with a Jewish girl,
that nothing else
will matter
but how they feel,

like a Capulet
or a Montague
of old, kneeling
side-by-side
at the family grave,
kissing
its every stone,

while you tell me once
again this isn't love.

Why I Will Never Win a Poetry Contest

I have to say
I love you
in 40 lines
or less.

Space between
the stanzas
count as a line.

This is now my
10th—11th—
fuck I am in trouble.

I have no *room* to spare

for the schmaltzy
iridescence of your eyes,
for the syrup
of your touch and your taste,
to reminisce
about *our very first time,*
sounding like a
bumbling incarnation
of cliché.

If I was smart, / I would have / written /
everything / like this.

And to hell with the breaks of strophes.

But though I'm clearly
not too bright, dim-
witted in fact, I really am in love,
with *you*, and to prove it

I will disqualify
myself
from this vexing
competition,

which offers nothing but
remittance, publication,
some purported, to-be-fading
prestige;

sacrifice the lauds
I may have won,
some certificate
in my bedroom—

that supposedly
takes your place
and keeps me warm.

Bliss

My window
is an extra eye, one that tells
my brain it isn't raining,
how gusty the gales
might be, that the city
has sent its crew
to furrow the street,
that a dog
is doing its business
in the hedge my neighbour
planted—to keep
the unwanted away.

My window never blinks
although it can—
with a placid
tug on the blinds.

And should some grit
get stuck
on its pupil,
a soggy
swipe
from a Jiffy Wipe

will surely put an
end to that.

But this is in truth is a poem
about the things
we choose to discern.
I could have
mentioned the woman
on the corner
after dusk, the man
who's a stone's throw
away—clothed in leather-
black; both
selling commodities
that we'd rather not
distinguish.

And do we call them
blinds
since they block our sight

from a glimpse
which leads to
perception?

When our vision
has been veiled to
something we simply
can't accept—

the ignorance
we're gifted
with the *pull*
of a nylon cord,
as if a
parachute
floating you tenderly
to the ground,
blanketing
your head
and crumpled body,

shrouding the sound
around you,
telling you in its
murmur that you're safe.

Halos

—inspired by *The Kiss of Judas*,
circa 1305, by Giotto di Bondone

No one has a halo
anymore. The Impressionists
and the Realists
saw to that.

You find them
in paintings of old,
wrapped around the head
of Jesus,
both before
and after the thorns;

the Virgin Mary
seated
in the clouds,
the communion of saints
& martyrs
bowed about her;

and you wonder
if each nimbus
had reflected in a
mirror, if anyone
else could see them,

the others in
the artwork, for example,
that it should have been
enough to *vindicate*—

surely in the case
of Christ—dragged away
by soldiers in the
Garden, kissed by
Giotto's Judas,

all of whom
passed it off
as an *illusion*, a twisted
trick of the moon,
a hat or helmet
of sorts, able to glow-in-the-
dark,

the wiles of
a sorcerer, always
on the cusp
of deception,

or one of those
sundogs in the sky

they'd seen *before*,
able to bounce its
glow

upon *anything*
beneath—

even an ostrich, for instance,

one that doesn't belong
in the solemn scene,

despite the circle
of admirers
around it:
the hippos
and chimpanzees,

even the lion
with its mane
who gave a curtsy,

that every time
an artist tried to
paint it,
its head would quickly
plunge into the sand,

as it does
to this very day,

unable to handle the
two-edged sword of fame,
its flip-side notoriety,

which *holiness* often bestows
whenever the light
comes to rest
above your shoulders.

The Mona Fucking Lisa

After a single session,
I already regret my *sign-up*
for this ekphrastic poetry
course, cursing to you
the assignment I was given:

*Mona Lisa, the fucking Mona
Lisa, like that hasn't been done
a gazillion times*

and yes, I won't be able to fake it,
that everyone and their mailman
knows her visage,
are well-versed in da Vinci's flair,
and their lofty expectations
will be something I can't deliver.

You ask me what our poet friend
was given, the one who always gets
the lucky breaks, and I tell you the
Voice of Fire,
three lines of blue-red-blue,
vertically trite and prosaic,
that no one's ever heard of Barnett
Newman because he sucks,

that I could have scrawled a sonnet
on my kindergarten days,
on a pair of simple colours,

how the Gallery
had been fleeced in '89,
caught up in the avant-garde,
how 1.8 million
could have gone to help
the homeless,
paid for their chalets
and pedicures, covered
the cost and tip
for their tortellini
Bolognese;

but as it is,
I have to *sleuth* my way
behind that Delphic smile,
invent a tale of Giocondo,
that Leonardo
tried to paint her
minus mirth and maturation,
in 1499,

when his subject began to sob
from pent-up grief, reliving the death
of her baby daughter,

his *Moaning Lisa* a work of art
the Renaissance ignored
(bathing in their beam
of erudition), that even Machiavelli
said *chin up, she needs a grin;*

that when the *time*
arrived to try it all again,
da Vinci made a jest,
a side-splitter, that Lisa barely
smirked at his ill-timed droll,
that he hadn't a clue
how it felt to love and lose,
consumed as he was with
innovation, invention,
his maps and magnum opus,

failing to heed
the red of blood and life,
her blue, blue mood.

**Nouvelle Vague, or Someone
googled my name and began to wonder**

Someone asked me
if I was the same Andreas
Gripp who starred in the movie,
The Dove on the Roof.

I replied it wasn't
possible. After all,
the flick begat
a sizeable cult
following, albeit in
Germany (really just
East Germany,
the year it was produced,
at the dawn of re-
unification, but I can't
bog down this poem
with some historical
rigmarole),
while everything
I do has always
finished with a
flop.

Let's face it: the actor
playing *Daniel*

is much better-looking
than me;
that I couldn't
remember lines
to save my life, that Iris
Gusner, the director
ahead of her time,
would have no *use*
for a Canadian boy—
who'd never
mastered *Deutsch*
or took directions.

When I looked it up online
on *Cinema*,
I saw a brief synopsis
having nothing to do with
doves,

just the plurality of
love
and its many
incarnations;

that I have *no* idea
on how it begins

or who in the end
gets the girl;

knowing I could never
pull it off, pretend that
it was me, say I'd *dyed*
my blond for the role,
wore prosthetics on my
face
in order to mask
my true identity,
like a pair of bulky
glasses
over Clark Kent's
X-ray eyes,

keeping him
incognito,
so very long ago,
that it's *ridiculous*
you couldn't tell

that he and heroic
Superman

were one and the very
same, never-ever seeing
them together—in action
or in the drudge of
groceries,

couldn't solve the sum
of one-times-one,

even with his slicked-
back hair
adjusted,

with a comb
from the Five-and-Dime,
known to carry all
that you'd imagine,

its dollar-store
descendent
having bins of foreign
films, maybe one
that harkens back to
Nouvelle Vague,

that the odds you'd
discover
it was me

were the same
as a red-caped man
from another world—
who could leap in the
air
like a bird,

an emblem of peace
who eventually
saves the day,
waving to those *below*
who haven't a clue
who he really is.

A Little Young

When I noted
Elizabeth Taylor
was rather pretty,

in 44's *National
Velvet*,

you said *she's
a little young*.

Yet she wasn't
a little young
for the Depression,
Edward's abdication,
a Great War's
2nd coming,

that Hiroshima
happened
at the dawn of
her teenaged years.

In *reality*
she was my elder,
since I was birthed
in '64,

32-times
my age the night
the Beatles
hit it big,
had watched them sing
on Sullivan, a glass
of gin & tonic
in her hand,
a cigarette
hanging loosely
in the other.

Indeed it's *turnabout*,
that *she* was the one
who might have been
a robber of the cradle,
had I expressed
such thoughts
at the time.

Case-in-point:
the first time
you and I had met
was back in '95,

while *she'd* been
in a marriage
for the eighth
and final time,
a wonder
of the wedding
world.

And now be
rest assured, I will never
utter a word
about *Lolita*, portrayed
by *15-year-old*
Sue Lyon, her character
even younger,

will only shower *disdain*
on Humbert Humbert,
that despicable
man who envisioned
a fatal ploy,
played by the veteran
James Mason,
who suffered so many
glares
for years to come—

while *I*
was just a twinkle
in my mother's
future eye,

have long-since
learned the perils
that come with love
for an older woman.

Rabies, or Tissues are a boy's best friend

I was hoping
to make you cry
with all the images
that follow.

Not because I'm
mean, heartless, one who
seems to revel
in the sadness of another,
but the *ageless* tropes
which burn
whenever an artist's
on their game—

be they playwright
or a poet, a master
of brush or stone.

I want to convey
the kind of love
remembered in
Old Yeller,

when death is just
a single shot away,

from a rifle
that is held
in trembling arms,
its water-from-the-
eyes you can't forget,

aware that even a
grossly funny *tramp*
can turn the tables,
bring about a flow
from a *flower* girl,

and if these
won't do the trick, I'll
poach a recollection
that will sear, a picture
I could never
unsee,
hid in a sheltered
closet while I wept:

the man who
rocks his mother
in a chair, in Munsch's
Love You Forever;

embraced like a *Velveteen*
Rabbit, or a cat
that's lost in an alley,

in a moment of deluge,

when you *can't*
tell the tears
from the rain,

Hepburn's mascara
running
like a river 'neath the moon,

when there's nothing
left to absorb
its cleansing surge,
its overflow of
fervour,

so smitten with
its empathy
I promise
we will wail.

Juxtapositions

I pluck the *olives* from the
salad and that makes it less than
Greek. You ask me if they're green
or black and I state
it makes no difference.

I replace the blocks of feta
and consider *German-Jew*.
It's *been* an oxymoron
since nineteen-thirty-three.
I'll blend some smoky *Rauchkäse*
with an aged *Gvina Levana*—

swap my baseball cap
for a yamaka
in *case* you take offense.

Now bring me beer from Bavaria
and hot latkes from the slum.
I'll gladly prove
what *cannot* go together

is just a *fallacy* of thought:

A frown is a smile
that's standing on its head.

Feet are a pair of hands
which are unwilling to clasp
in prayer.

Toes are very cognisant
that fingers are more graceful—
so they *never* stretch for the sky.

Unable to grant any light of its *own*,
the moon is but a mirror for the sun
in which to worship its own reflection
(and you thought that
Dorian Gray
was the one who's really vain).

What is *ugly*, anyway?
Is it the absence of beauty
or too much of it all at once?

A Lesson In Impermanence

By now we know
the Berenstains
weren't Jewish,
there was never
a bear
who was *stein*,
all of those many
matzos
going to waste;

permanence
dematerialized,
whenever Scotty
had been asked
to *beam me up*,

without the post-script
placement of his name,

and it's also *there*—
in Vader's revelation
to his son, never really
addressing him as *Luke*,
only to die in the film
that shortly followed,

without a chance
to bond together
over pints.

I remember
scouring my children's
books in search of
George's tail—curious, unable to
recall the way by which he'd
lost his swirly appendage—

not to be confused
with Madeline's
appendix,

her scar of *now you*
see it, now you don't,
depending on the version
of the doll
that girls were given.

I never should have
started this
annoying exercise,
distracted by the hook of

Bette Davis
Eyes,

Kim Carne's throaty hit
from '81, thinking it was

all the boys
think she's a spaz

when it's been *spy*
for 40+ years,
a 007
of sorts,

and not a hothead
throwing tantrums
whenever you
step on her foot,

yet another *Mandala*
Effect—damn,
it's *Mandela*,
after the Nelson
who never died
while kept in prison,

that it's had nothing
to do with Buddhists
all this time.

Søren and Hobbes

I think I've become
a cynic
due to everybody's lies—
hell, bullshit won its way
into the White House
yet again;
while the richest man on
Earth

posts nothing but
fabrications
every hour, would even make
Pinocchio cringe,

and if he had a wooden nose,
it would be a walkway
to the heavens, saving
all the rocket fuel
it takes to reach the moon.

But I'm sick of Trump
and Elon, know that X
should stand for *wrong*,
like the *scarlet*
pencil marring
every answer—

on my numbers
in grade 9 math,
when I thought I'd pulled
a fast one, saying tallies
are *subjective*

so who's the one to say
they're incorrect?

I remember that my
teacher wasn't fooled,
asking with a sneer
if I'd studied
Kierkegaard,

saying philosophy
is the oil
of one-hundred thousand
snakes,

that everything's
a scam:

the email
from the supposed
lotto winner,

offering
60 million
for the cost of ocean
shipping, that it's *nothing*
compared to the gold
in which I'm paid,

or the old man
on the corner
passed-by daily—
not *loved*
by a single
one,

who pretends that he is
deaf, boombox on the sidewalk
as he pans,
vowing to buy Vivaldi
just to *prove*
he cannot hear.

"me too"

When I tell you *I love you*
you answer "me too"

and perhaps I misconstrue,
that you love *yourself*
like the affirmations
advise,

the ones we see on Instagram,
that Rupri Kaur is full of them,
churning them out like some poet
in a fast-food window,

where you pick up a side of
"you're better off without him"
plus some platitude on the rain
to wash it down;

or maybe "me too" is a memory,
in the (not so) recent past:

an abusive ex, a diddling dad,
the gymnastics coach who always
held you snug, checked out your
ass instead of your landing,
after vaulting and parallel bars;

but then I've always read too
much into your words,
thinking there's some *story*
below the surface,

a recollection
that encircles like a shark,
that you're afloat
in a punctured dinghy
awaiting rescue,

by an aqua knight who rides
the seven seas, one who sees
a kraken where there's not,

thinks "right back at you,"
"ditto kiddo"

is the beast from a thousand
fathoms he's come hastily
to slay.

Love Poem for a Woman

If it's *blasphemy*
to say this
then so be it.

You are the one whom God
should have made in the beginning.
A more beautiful name
for each animal;

winding in a way
that only a river
and a *woman* possibly can—
the extended, rippling
tresses,
the arcing of breasts
and hips,

the concaving
small of the back,

the melodic
lilt of the voice,

someone the Lord
would not have said *no* to
regarding what's in-
between the leaves—

a fruit
no tree of knowledge
can ever keep from you
again.

Detroit

Day-twah

is how you pronounced
it, my ostentatious friend,
as though the French
were still infesting
where the river
worms and bends;

as if both *Antoine*
and *Alphonse*
had a share in
Motown Records;
Soul Train
spinning a sultry
Édith Piaf;

a fleur-de-lis
the crest of *Hockey-*
town, with neither wheel
nor red-dipped wing
discernible;

the Tigers
plugging *croissants*—
for the stretch
in the bottom seventh.

And then there's Sir Graves
Ghastly, sporting a
Parisian beret, out of his
screaky coffin,
desperately needing a tin of
WD-40, purchased
across the river, *half*
of the instructions
en Français—to the chagrin
of every *Windsorite*
around.

My dear, flamboyant
fellow, the French
were *never* the first—
it simply sounds
romantic
to the non-
Indigenous folk,

for the lovers of a
Hunter's Moon,
painting the sky
aglow,
like a drunken
Delacroix,

strolling within
the shadows
of Art Deco's
Fisher Building,
as if beneath
the Eiffel Tower,

ambling hand-in-hand,

toward the man
selling franks
on petite baguettes,
a smell of ripened
Brie that wafts
around him.

On the day the poets went on strike

there were no more birds
in the trees—well, there were,
but every finch and sparrow
felt relief, no more
voyeurs spying
on their sunrise
serenades,
taking all the credit
for their resplendence;

while the *Cardinals*
were just a baseball team
from Missouri—the *Show*
Me State, though there were
none to show you anything
at all, how your life has any
meaning and that its river
doesn't snake along its path,
it doesn't even worm,
because no one's there to
jot down what they watch.

And time? It has no more
meaning,
one day like another,
every mundane hour
as the last,

no metaphors
in your lunch,
no shadows
at your side
in the noonday
light;

in fact, no one's
there to give a flying
fuck—strike that—
fucks cannot fly,
unless they're birds
of course, making sultry
love
in the morning sky,

the one the
clouds
can't be bothered
to deface,

and whether there is
rain it matters not,
because no one really
cared—

during all the times
we made it *beautiful*—
an April flower
here

and a child
beneath its shower
throwing the *shield*
of her umbrella
to the wind,

leaping puddle-
to-puddle

like a frog
upon the lilies
of a sheen,

one that *Basho* would have
ignored—had he marched
along the pond
with fellow bards,
picketing every
splash
with empty placards,

refusing to write a
word without a contract,
the one in which
you agree to blubber
madly—
upon every pithy image
like never before.

Lucas, Life of the Party

You've always liked it
dim. Complain about
light pollution,
that it prevents you
from seeing the stars,

while the steeple
that shines every
night? *It blinds*
my fucking eyes.

You stopped
receiving
my Christmas cards
fifteen years ago,
sending one back
with a sticky,
jotting *Rudolph's*
nose
should never be called
to lead,

and then that time
at the company party,
when you wouldn't put
a lampshade on your
head,

despite your being
sotted to the brim—
as per your father's
tradition,

as per everyone's
drunken custom
at the time,

saying
it mutes the light,
that without its
linen sheath

the glare
was much too bright,
losing all the
comfort of its solace,

whenever you slept it
off
upon the couch,

snoring on Sunday morning
instead of singing
Amazing Grace,

in the choir
you were in as a little
boy, fondled between
the sabbaths and your legs,
the evenings after
practice when the candles
were ablaze
and the others
fled for home,

one day bawling
when Christ remarked
*don't keep it under a
bushel* he was wrong.

Skeletons

If trees are lungs
in the summer,
they are nothing but
bones in the winter.

Skeletons lack the *credit*
they deserve. A skull
just the harbinger
of horror,
its once-eyes and
cheeks and smile
no longer
to be considered;

and whether it's
skin
or whether it's
leaves,

the absence of
both
are the poster boys
come *Hallowe'en's*
arrival—amid every-
thing that's ghastly and
macabre.

And how quickly
we forget: the air which
maples gift us,
with our every
inhalation,

the beauty
of that child
on her bike,

run over
much too soon,
by a car that
sped in the dark,
adding
a million toes

to its runaway, carbon
footprint.

Stephen King
might one day
write a novel
about it all:

Gabriella

the girl who rose
from the grave,
haunting every driver
after dusk,
on that forlorn
stretch of road,
bordered on either
side

with *osseins*
of ash and birch,
whatever *else*
they may have been.

Poets no longer
scrawl
on the juvenilia
of those trunks,
the etching
of initials
into their thriving,
living bark,

now desolate
in the mist,

gnarly branches
vacant of wing and wonder,

bereft
of the launching of
green, the fires of
orange and red,
spring and fall
forgotten in the fog,
and when Luna
reveals each
reaching, fleshless
finger:

scaring you out of your
wits

as you race
beneath
their canopy of
bones, which tap
upon your windshield

like the dot-dot-
dash of code
from the ugly dead.

The Automaton

I'm asked at once
to confirm the fact
that *I am not a robot*

but I am.

I don't need to
wrestle with a CAPTCHA,
say how *many*
fucking squares
contain the form of
a juggling clown;

and who's to say
he isn't just a *poser*;
dropping the eggs
mere seconds after
this pic was hurriedly
snapped?

If I were *human*,
I wouldn't give a crap
about the man behind the
paint, the stupid scarlet
ball upon his nose,

the wig
that makes him look
ridiculous, an end-times
Phyllis Diller.

But because I'm made
of metal, I think about his
night that lies ahead,
washing all that gunk
from his miserable
face, the grin he's never
held past 6pm,
the single bed he
sleeps on—hard
as an iron *door*;
one that keeps him
barred from actually
living, a woman's
wispy touch and
sincere smile;

falling in *love*
like a man of flesh-and-
blood will often do,

if his chest contains a
heart instead of Intel,
the winding green of
veins in lieu of wires,

wondering *why*
he has to prove
he's truly human,
when he's in
the same position
I'm currently in,

that he's been hurt
so very often

they should sense
he's not a *robot*
from the salt of his misty
touch, the quiver
of his finger
on the mouse,

that he needn't
click a box to say
I'm real.

The Tightwad

Dollar King

is probably not
the most idyllic place
to pick up flowers,
especially when they're
fake.

She'll call you *cheap*, deride
your half-assed effort—
to find an *anniversary*
bouquet; clearly during the gasp
of the final minute.

It's to *efflorescence*
what *Alpha-getti* is—
to a romantic, Italian
dinner—though yes,
you can arrange *I Love You*
in its basement-bargain
sauce, put on Pavarotti's
Chittara Romana.

But there's being
a little *frugal*
and then there's
Marley & Scrooge,

your wallet unable to
open,
as if it's been *krazy-*
glued.

It's a roll of
one-ply paper
when *Cottonelle's*
a toonie more;

the socks with
eleven holes
within your shabby
shoes from *George*;

it's an expired
box of *Turtles*
when *Laura Secord's*
daisy-fresh—

and I don't mean a
faded fabrication,
but the feel of the *real*
McCoy, its baby's
bottom corolla,

the one you
pluck the petals from
to see if you're truly
loved,
if it carries
to your final
breath,

though I recall
you once remarked

just how *everlasting*
every counterfeit
can be,
handing out a 50
to the beggar
along the way,

his gesture
of *thumbs-up*, smile of
gratitude—
once you departed the
store
with a scentless bundle,
its plastic, greenish
stems,

his conveyance to
you
they'll be in *bloom*
a thousand years
from now,

when our currency
has *died*
and blown away,

when *love* is spelled
with the letters of
a newborn tongue.

“google it”

When you asked me for
the best Italian bistro
in this city, I answered
google it.

That day on the beach,
as you peered into the
murk of knee-deep
water, you questioned if it
was *safe* to take a swim,
and I responded *google*
it.

Dalini's had a slew of
great reviews—its ambience,
its al dente and
pinot noir, its well-earned
Michelin stars;

while the lake
had tested positive
for bacteria, the kind
that makes you sick,
and I was relieved to
stop our plunge
in a matter of moments,

singing the praise
of the county's
daily testing
regimen.

I reply to your
every question
with *google it*
There is nearly nothing
that the search
cannot answer—
and yes, I imagine
you think me *lazy*,
terse, that my lexicon
is void
of romantic words.

But when you ask me
if I love you
I say *google*
the centipede,
how it never
runs out of
legs,

google the single
polar bear on ice,
never bearing
to leave it
until the final
floe has melted,

and please *google* the man
in Uzbekistan,
becoming a widower
at 21,

never remarried,
never missed a daily
graveside visit,
and when he turned
one hundred and one,
worried the world
would run out of flowers
before his final, doleful
kiss upon her name.

Longsuffering

I feel bad for 404
as its page is
never found,
that it's lumped with
oops and *error*—

that all of the numbers
before it
somehow escape
your laptop's blame.

I imagine *404*
was the final straw,
that my browser
was exceedingly patient
until then,

that three-hundred and
fifty-seven
nearly incurred
the wrath of Chrome;
biting its crypto-tongue
until able to take it
no longer—

while Safari
simply shrugged in its
indifference, finally
went along,

Firefox so forlorn
it will put up with *any-*
thing—

even a mischievous rascal
who at last
has run out of chances,
should've surely *quit*
while far ahead,

just having
reached a milestone
it could have settled on,
fatally greedy for more,

405
exhaling in relief,
escaping our collective
frustration, our profanity-
laden rants
by the skin of its teeth.

Magic

The final line of this
poem no longer
exists. It was surely there
for the taking, its fingernails
clutching rock, at the
top of a ragged *cliff*
from which it hung,
a *Wile E. Coyote*
in the making.

This poem's closing line
is a bar of *soap*
in a steamy shower,
pushed *away* from my
hand by its slime,
ready to trip me up
the moment it falls,
my eyes shut tightly
from the suds of cheap
shampoo, its lie of
no more tears.

The final line of this
poem is a cheeky *kid*
playing hide-and-seek,

concealed behind the
curtains, waiting for me
to open—

then disappear
like David Blaine.

Dear darling of a
brat, I promise not to
harm, will only *borrow*
what I need to make this
grand, let you vanish
in the air

once I've wrenched you
from my hat
by your fluffy ears.

Changeling

Every time you
blink
it's a different
story—

a character
who morphs
as winds allow,

first a gelding
in the ether
missing love,
a spaniel
run away
while chasing sticks,
the wood of which
transformed

into a siren
on the rocks;

while some
will swear
they've seen
the face of Christ,

his mother
in immaculate
white,
or the messenger
of Allah,
sent to warn
the infidels
like me,

too caught up
with reveries
of my own:
the countries
left unseen,
our hands which
clasped

blown callously
apart;

in that cotton
archipelago
aloft above our heads,
sailing in a breeze
of summer blue,

the shape of a ship
at port,
a pirate
chugging rum
upon its deck,
stumbling *drunk*
along a plank
within the seconds
of a whim,
plunging into
a sea that isn't
there,

our deceiving
ourselves with
castles in the air
we're not alone.

Burro di Arachidi

We think that
we're romantic
since we dine in
candlelight—

here in our
apartment,
not just lunch
and dinner,
but with the
crack
of a free-range
egg,

Skippy
in the holes
of morning crumpets,
melting like a cupcake
in the oven, Honeycomb
aglow
amid the milk,

all of which
reveal both love
and longing—

you with the
remembrance
of our London
honeymoon,
the bobby
with his night-
stick
at the ready,
lit by corner
streetlamps
on an evening
without gloom—

me with recollections
of our kisses,
our visit to *Leoni's*
with the tablecloth
that beamed
with minted promise,
our vow to
recreate
that heated setting—

thrice daily—

when your lipstick
smeared my mouth
instead of gloop
from a plastic jar,
sitting in a shadow
by the toaster,
a knife lodged
in its sweet &
salty maw.

On Finally Winning the Griffin

the medium is the message

—Marshall McLuhan

My cat likes to saunter
across my keyboard,
spelling some unknowable
truth,

that a future
archaeologist
will one day
read and wonder,
what the printed
sheet of paper
really meant;

but if I'm *savvy*
for a change, I'll
wisely take the credit
for the text,

claiming that it's
innovative, a post-
poetry *masterpiece*,

that mokrohihtjlkkbjoeks
may one day be the title
of a book, ciwhexjgheias
in the footsteps
that will follow,
each word like the *ball*
of a British lotto,
spinning round and round
until it exits, joining
a string of numbers
worth a million,

and it's then
I will recline,
my feet upon
a tuffet, smoking
a Cuban cigar,
let *another*
do the labour
for a change,

win me a literary
prize, allow me to be
the toast
of any town,

as I whirlwind
'round the world
in 80 days—
in a limo, not a balloon—
knowing my feline
confidante
will surely *protest*,
hiss at the whirling
heights,

as I feign
to all the planet
it was *me*,

telling students of
McLuhan
to hold my beer—
that the *message*
is the medium
today,

keeping kitty
pumped with catnip,
her caterwauling
voice
under wraps,

dreaming of an
endless
stream of letters,

so lost in all her
slumber
that she'll never
have the chance
to betray our
secret.

The Puffin

Here this:
a puffin
is not a baby
penguin,
despite my decades
of thinking it so.

I cannot be
angry
at the puffin,
its countenance
of cute,
its psychedelic
beak,
no matter how hard
I try;

adoring its every
sway
from side-to-side,
much like its
fellow seabird,
surprised by its
capacity to fly,

confused by
its being an
imprint
of Penguin Books,
its children's line
since 1941,

that they're clearly
to blame
for my ignorance—
there in *A Little Princess*,
in the tales of
Anne and Alice,
and especially
Call of the Wild,

which, to my chagrin,
contained no penguins
at all—
clueless I was
on *where* they
really lived,

thinking *perhaps*
they were away
when Jack London
came to visit,

shopping for tuxedos,
at the place the
puffins do,
who took to the air
once suited—

while the penguins
doubled back
with their receipts,
fuming at the
snugness
of their fit,

pouting like Pingu,
crisp like Chilly Willy,

cursing their genetics,
their ever-inability
to soar,

retracing every
step in single file,
their long, bitter
waddle
in the snow.

Canada

This is an ekphrasis
on *The Beaver*
Builds A Home,
a painting by
François Derge,
which I procured
within the vivid
imagination
of my mind.

It's an immaculately
empty canvas, even absent
of a dot,

and forget the whole
polar bear in a snow-
storm schtick, that's been
done to death,

for this beaver's still
alive, and it's time that
poets wrote
about this symbol
of my country,
much more than an
etching
on our nickel,

and when you question
why this creature
fled the picture, with its buck
teeth like a pair
of ivory sentries,
guarding what it chews,
its blacksmith-
flattened tail

like a child's
ping-pong paddle,
one that's smacked the ball
beyond the table,

I'll say it *left* to
find a branch
it overlooked,
needed to lay a
roof
above its head,
that the nearest one
was half-a-mile
away, far outside this
portrait's
chiseled frame,

that all of the other
wood

was *brutally*
washed away,
while the beaver
was otherwise engaged,
maybe posing
for an artist
on his way into
the forest—

a man from Montréal
I've just invented,
who by the time
he stumbled
belatedly on the scene,
saw nothing
but a vacant
stream, couldn't bear
to paint
this rodent's sorrow,
knew that everyone
and their milkman
has rendered creeks before—

water's eerie flow
between the banks,

where a hovel
briefly stood,
though astonishing
in its feat
of engineering,

its ability to *move*
a phantom dauber,
disheartened by this
loss, knowing nothing
can be done
to bring it back,
or this would-be
masterpiece,

hanging on a wall
within the ROM,
eventually *flown*
outside the country,
majestic in the Louvre,
giving *birth*
to every patron's
woeful tears.

Meter Maid

*Lovely Rita, meter maid,
nothing can come between us*

—The Beatles

The parking meter has ripped me off
again.

Granted, a quarter doesn't buy a lot
these days, 12 minutes
in the crumbling core,
and there's little I could have done
in that paltry span:

watch a person score some meth,
perhaps,
or a behemoth lumber towards me
with his biceps freshly inked;

or maybe spy the hoodied teen
in front of the *Cash and Dash*,
with all of the windfall
from a senior's cheque.

Shaking this rusty contraption
accomplishes nothing—neither does
thrashing the part that promises
each Sunday will be free —

which does me no *good*
on this middle-of-the-week
kind of moment.

I'm *yearning* for the world
that's gone *away*, in which Petula
Clark had sung to go *Down-*
town;

storefront *windows*
filled with stock,
the bustle of suits and dresses,
a cop directing traffic,
with seldom a skateboard seen.

I would have waited
for *Lovely Rita*
to arrive,
the heat from her sultry sway,

her expunging this metal rogue
of the piece of *change*
it stole from me,

saying it *buys* a leisurely stroll,

a chance to see the sun
ascend its zenith,

with plenty of time for coffee
at the shop around the corner,
or maybe *lunch* and herbal tea,

that she'll join me
once she's dispensed with
all her tickets.

Sowing Flowers in the Fall

The cemetery's
sexton
warned you shouldn't
plant a thing
December 1st,
that nothing can
survive
its chilling gales,

this numb
we think as *winter*,
when it's autumn
that's to blame—

two-faced
in its tease
of second summer,
pulling out the
welcome mat
from under our
very feet,
strapped within
the sandals
of September,

donned the waning
days
before October,

crunching
shrivelled leaves
which had lost
their will to live,
their spectrum
of farewell

finally plunging
in November,
a kaleidoscope's
mosaic
on the ground—

the soil
that's beneath it
rigor mortis,
shovel in your
hands
forever failing
to make a dent,

the smack of
metal's nose
as if *upon*
a heartless stone,
bitter
and unyielding,

what once
was a blossoming
shrub

now wind-stripped
of its beauty,
left with only
the rattle
of its bones,

muted
as the bird-chimes
on your porch,
none to hear
their soothing
melody,

windows
bolted shut
against the cold,
upon the sunlight's
sinking lie
of lasting warmth,

eternal
as the love
she howled was yours.

A Place Beneath the Water

We drive to the beach
the day you're released
from the hospital,
the pills afloat in your glass
currently a memory
taken by tides;

and I suggest a brief, brisk swim
in cleansing waves,
to wash the stress
from your battered mind,
and you strip-down rather hastily,
splash about as a child might,
as you did when you were a girl,

and I lose sight of you
in a panic of thirty seconds,
as you submerge your head
and hold your breath
for a protracted half-a-minute,
attempting to touch
that part of yourself
where the air cannot reach
nor light tell the world
what you've hid.

Why Haiku is a Waste of My Time

What endless
depth of meaning can you
say in 17 clicks?

I know, English forms
have no such syllabic
binds,
though a line of 3 remains,
and you can't get away
with cheating: haikus should not
be titled, and no sappy
dedication
will pass the litmus test—

from the monk
in meditation
in Kyoto,

pondering
every breath
in solemn *brevity*,

and when it comes
to life and death,
surely can't be bothered
with your bleeding heart's
truncation,
your former *paramour*;

how lovely that they were,

that everything which is
said
has been wrought a bazillion
times,

not only in an epic
penned by Sappho,

but in the blink
of an inch
on the page,

that's shackled
every haijin
for centuries:

sunfall breaking clouds
a spill from my squint of eyes
gardens where we'd sat

with no room for *I loved you*,
no place to
inscribe
their beautiful name.

Mahavira

I've fallen in love
with every animal
in the world.

So much so
I'm unable to do a thing
around the house.

You ask me to clean
the windows so they'll
shine, and I say that
spotlessness will harm
the backyard birds,

the thud of *slam*
and sudden death,
that I'll be triggered
by the sight of *feathers*,
a blue jay's broken neck
and fractured skull.

Our vacuum is an enemy
of *ahimsa*, that Sanskrit
word of peace for every
Jain, non-violence
with every step, that I've studied
Mahavira—

am convinced
the spiders in our carpet
smell of sentience;
that to suck up their silky
webs, their eggs and
future offspring, would be
nothing short of murder.

Live and let live,
in all those corners
we never look at
anyway.

I'd wash the supper
dishes, dust the counter-
tops, if it weren't for the
microbes and the mites,
that they've existed
much longer than we have,

that to disregard their feelings
due to stature
is clearly sizeist—
they're in a universe
all their own

and we surely wouldn't like it
if a colossus
of cosmic proportions
did the very same to us.

And the reason I refuse
to cut the lawn? The mower is
a guillotine on wheels, one
that would make *Napoleon*
shudder,

that the field mouse in the grass
has done *nothing*
to deserve
this dreadful fate,
that both of us
will reap from lofty turf,

you with your toes
in the soft of green,
me with my feet
upon the ottoman,
cheering when the quarterback
is sacked, by the defensive
end who's never squashed
a bug since he was born.

The Trial

It's *not*
the highest mountain
but a jar of
pickle juice.

It's not a
molten bed
of burning coals,
but the gulp
of sour dill,
the brine &
cloven garlic,
the wince
of eyes and
lips,

nausea's
inevitable
pull, a dash
toward the
toilet,

reminiscent
of the days
you offered dares,

to prove how much
I cared,

my streaking
through the streets
without a stitch, without
a paper bag
upon my head,

knowing my *feet*
were well prepared
for any surface, toiling
up a summit
if required,

only bites
from a single
cucumber
to sustain,

letting my *love*
take all the laurels
it could get.

Paris

This one is not so Grand
as its river, no Seine
cutting at its heart
or couples arm-in-arm
amid *je t'aime*.

We can see
the eroding townscape
from this crowded
rooftop bistro,
and there's a soufflé
on the menu you'd like to try,
while I scan the varied wine list
for *Château Valfontaine*.

We made a *hard*, last-minute
turn off the 403, figured
Brantford would be dull,
there's only so much
Bell and Gretzky
we can digest, yet again.

And substituting for a tower?
There's the truss bridge
serving the railway
that traverses the muddy banks,

its lattice now a respite
for a dozen, migrating flocks,

and, upon which, the locals say,
some have confessed their love;
plunged down in *ultime liberté*.

Cassiopeia

On our anniversary,
we spend the evening
gazing at the stars

yet not as lovers do,
making wishes
on ones that fall,
but imagining instead
there's an alien couple
on some distant
speck-of-a-world,

not quite as human as us,
with a few of their organs
flipped around,
but still the kind of people
we'd relate to,

not as deeply "in love"
as before,
yet *enough*
to never leave
the other,

and we wonder
if they think
they'd each be happier
in the arms of another,

if they too
have awkward silence
in the aftermath
of a quarrel,

if they believe that they can last,
at least, until the offspring
are all grown up,

if they envision
what it would feel like
to have their spouse,
unexpectedly,
pass away,

and if they'd ever survive
a frigid night
looking *up* at the sky
without them.

Psalm for Aquarius

In the days and nights
of my naiveté,
when hope blasted blue
in carbon cloud,
the constellations
stepped out of line,
formed new patterns,
gave my dreams names
that they'd discarded:

*Pisces, someday she'll adore you,
hold your hanging head
beside her breast,
pluck out poisoned hooks
inside your heart.*

And of love, it lost
its battle with beauty,
lives on to cut to the quick,
chain the *soul*
in heavy iron,
to thrash hopelessly,
like fish in a sweeping net,
then hauled to shore
while salvation ripples beneath,
so cold in all its glory.

This is the Reason

I've never written you
a love letter, as I did for the girls
I crushed on in school,
vowing a childish *forever love*.

I've been told that *both*
can never truly be promised,
there are too many variables
upon which they can falter—

an unexpected loss
of mind and memory,
the foreboding phantom
of infidelity,

that our lifespans
are simply too long,
the decay of what we were
befalling while we breathe,

that the warbler outside my
window, his years but a
jaunt through junior high,
says it better,

his skyward pledge
to his treetop mate
daily putting me to shame.

The Carnation

The carnation I left you
was given with much pondering—
not as romantic, they'll say,
as its more beloved, historic rival,
the rose;

not as many songs and poems
describing its allure;

without plethora
of oil paintings
to capture its pale pink *petals*
on canvas—

but please remember, darling,
they'll endure while the others drop,
even if but a day,
those extra, precious hours to say
I love you, I'm sorry, come back to me.





Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 relocated to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 30 books of poetry, including *Clocking the Equus: Poems Selected and New* (2025). His poems have been praised for their lyrical and literary excellence, accessibility, and for their blend of comic/poignant storytelling.



A long-time Londoner, Andreas Gripp now lives in Essex County along the shores of Lake Erie with his wife, Carrie. He has written over 30 books of poetry. His poems are grounded in the contemporary experiences of both common & uncommon people.

A love poem is a love poem is a---no, it really isn't. Broadening the boundaries of the genre is something you'll notice from the get-go. *Volare* turns this most precious of human sentiments on its head and redefines its place within our society in the perilous 2020s.

You have lost nothing from your edginess or the sharpness of your wit.

-James Deahl, poet & author



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